

Budget Unit Brief

FY 2017



Loess Hills Development and Conservation Authority

Purpose and History

The 1993 General Assembly established the Loess Hills Development and Conservation Authority to protect natural resources in the deep loess soil region of western Iowa. The Authority, composed of 23 western Iowa counties, originally used all funding to support infrastructure projects intended to mitigate stream channel erosion. In 1998, the General Assembly added an additional mission by creating the Loess Hills Alliance (LHA) within the Authority. The charge of the Loess Hills Alliance is to “create a common vision for Iowa’s Loess Hills, protecting special natural and cultural resources, while ensuring economic viability and private property rights of the region.” Concurrently, the Legislature created the Hungry Canyons Alliance (HCA) to continue the coordination of infrastructure projects. The Authority’s board meets annually to oversee the LHA and HCA Boards.

Hungry Canyons Alliance Activities

The Hungry Canyons Alliance allocates resources to projects, approved by the HCA Board, that stabilize streambeds. Western Iowa streams were straightened in the early 1900s, increasing stream flow, deepening stream channels, and increasing stream width. Accelerated erosion has swept away farmland; damaged bridges, roads, and utility lines; and caused soil erosion along stream banks. The HCA partners with local governments to install grade control structures such as culverts, riprap, and weirs, in vulnerable streams and rivers. Capital projects are funded through a combination of state, federal, and local money. Counties must contribute a minimum of 20.0% to each grade control structure. The HCA also provides support for landowners to stabilize areas of gully erosion.

Loess Hills Alliance Activities

The Loess Hills Alliance includes seven counties and is governed by a 28-member board. Membership is voluntary, and participation in LHA projects is not required. In the 2011 [Comprehensive Development Plan](#), the Alliance identified four major goals: promoting collaboration among regional stakeholders, permanently protecting significant areas, increasing public awareness and tourism, and ensuring technical assistance is available to landowners. Past activities include research, promoting environmentally sound zoning ordinances, technical outreach, grants, and purchasing permanent easements.

Funding History

Funding to the Loess Hills Development and Conservation Authority has varied over the years; however, the average appropriation over the past 10 years has been \$550,000. The majority of the funding is from the Environment First Fund; however, some funding has been from the General Fund.

Related Statute

Iowa Code chapter [161D](#)

Revised August 23, 2016

More Information

Loess Hills Alliance: <http://www.loesshillsalliance.com/>

Hungry Canyons: <http://www.goldenhillsrccd.org/hungry-canyons-alliance.html>

Iowa General Assembly: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov>

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